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## SERMON DCXV.

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BY REV. OWEN STREET.

ANSONIA, CT.\*

### ANSONIA—REMEMBRANCE OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

“The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.”—Psalm cxii. 6.

Everlasting Remembrance! Nothing else that is so enduring can man leave behind him. His body can only be said to outlast his breath; his monuments are consumed by the elements, or eaten away by the tooth of time, and his institutions go to decay with the advance of society; but the memory of distinguished goodness is enduring. The portrait given in this psalm is as admirable in one age as in another; it loses nothing by time, or the changes that overturn the customs and usages of the world. “Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord—that delighteth greatly in his commandments. His seed shall be mighty upon earth; wealth and riches shall be in his house, and his righteousness endureth forever. Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness; he is gracious and full of compassion and righteous. A good man sheweth favor and lendeth; he will guide his affairs with discretion. Surely he shall not be moved forever; the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord; he hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth forever. His horn shall be exalted with honor.”

Here are the leading features of a type of character that is fitted to make a valuable and permanent impression on the world. It seems to have been sketched from life. Every generation

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\* On occasion of the death of Anson G. Phelps, Esq., of New York.

produces such men, and is modified by them, and retains their impress when they are gone. First of all is the fear of God, an element that binds to universal rectitude, and pervades and gives solidity to the entire character. This is accompanied with kindness to man, showing itself in daily favors, in lending for the accommodation of others, and in giving to the poor. Next comes the element of sound judgment or discretion which discovers itself in the general ordering of his affairs, and keeps him back from disastrous mistakes. Then we notice a certain fearlessness of evil tidings, or of intimations of evil, or of plots on the part of the designing. And finally, as near akin to this, that decision of character which is denoted by the expression, "his heart is fixed."

It is not strange that in the shading off of such a portrait, we should find "light arising out of darkness," or a ready recovery from reverses—great and immovable prosperity, and wealth, power and distinction, such as are expressed by "riches in his house"—coffers ever full—and "his horn exalted with honor." Such a man will make his influence felt in any sphere, and will be remembered when he is gone. There is an obvious tendency to this in the nature of things, and it is rendered sure by the ordination of Heaven. And there is a value in such remembrances to those who inherit them. They are a stimulus to every noble aspiration, and a check upon every tendency to degeneracy. Childhood gathers from them lessons of wisdom, and germs of enterprise and virtue. Youth is inspired with manly sentiments, and strengthened to resist temptation. The public mind is formed, moulded and impelled by influences emanating from the monuments and remembrances of departed worth. New England would not be what it is, without the memories of Plymouth and Bunker Hill. Had our nation no such history as that of '76, and no such names on the scroll of the past as those of Washington, and Henry, and Franklin, and Adams, its subsequent career had been widely different, and its prospects quite other than they are. Better blot out our capital, than change our history.

Thus too it is with smaller communities, who have an early history that is redolent of virtue. And thus it is even with a remote kindred, who can point to a distinguished and worthy ancestry. And it is worse than a sacrilegious neglect with either, to suffer such memories to go to decay. They lose with them a portion of healthful energy—an element of vitality, that is potent to resist corruption and moral disease. This place bears the name and many an impress of the intellect and heart of one, who is now gone from this world. It is fit that we should improve the occasion to gather up such remembrances and lessons from the past, and especially from his history, as may have a value for us.\*

\* As giving a sketch of the life and death of a most distinguished and devoted Christian merchant, this discourse can scarcely fail to interest and profit the general

This village is young, but it will not always be young; and facts that are now within our reach, if suffered to escape us, may be irrecoverably lost, and every salutary influence they might have exerted upon the generations to come, forfeited and thrown forever away.

The first thing which we have to record, then, as appropriate to this crisis, is the fact that our village does not bear the name that has been given it, without good and sufficient reason. It is not a mere thing of taste, or accident. It is a thing of nature and of right: a legitimate inheritance: the name of the father descending to the child. ANSON G. PHELPS was, in the largest sense, the father of this village. It owes its whole existence to him. It was his enterprise, his capital, his determined perseverance, that erected this into a business centre, and presented the attractions that have drawn this busy population together. But for him, it had remained a mere agricultural district, of no unusual importance, and no peculiar promise. And yet the circumstances that led to this result were not all of his arranging. There is too obvious a trace of a higher Providence, to be overlooked.

The first outlay of enterprise on the part of Mr. Phelps, in this valley, was at Birmingham, in the year 1834-5. His efforts were attended with such encouraging success, and the place enlarged with such rapidity and thrift, that all his thoughts, as regards this region, centred there. Some four or five years after he made this beginning at Birmingham, he began to turn his thoughts toward a larger improvement of the water of the Naugatuck, for the benefit of that village. But nothing was actually undertaken until about ten years afterward. This brings us down to the year 1844. Previously to this time, he had contemplated building a dam about a mile and a half below the present dam, and all his purchases of land had been made with that view. But he had been withheld from carrying this project into effect by the fact that he could not obtain the control of all the land that he would be obliged to overflow. At this time the present dam was completed; but its owners contemplated nothing further than a canal of moderate length, on the west side of the stream, giving them a fall of some fourteen feet. Mr. Phelps, laboring still under the same difficulty in regard to the low lands, which would be overflowed if he built the dam he had been so long contemplating, now conceived the gigantic scheme of substituting the dam already built, and continuing the canal on to Birmingham; thus securing the advantage of a large increase of power from the amount of water at command, and concentrating all the business it would create at that village.

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reader. Even its local bearing will enhance its public utility by exciting livelier feeling, and thus rendering more deeply impressive the sentiments so lucidly and happily presented by its author—sentiments of such vital importance to every village and people.—ED.

Had either of these plans prevailed, the village which we now inhabit would never have been built, and these churches and schools would have had no existence. But God had use for them, and other counsels must prevail. Mr. Phelps bought the dam in 1844, with the land necessarily appertaining to it, for twenty-four thousand dollars. He then attempted to purchase the land which he would need to occupy in carrying out his project. In these negotiations he was disappointed. Prices became suddenly inflated, and he judged it impolitic to proceed. But he was not the man to give up, and conclude that because a thing could not be done in one way, it could not be done at all. The river had two sides; and if he could not bring the water down on the one, what should hinder his trying the other? So he seems to have reasoned, and in a little time these heavy excavations and embankments were begun. In 1845 he commenced building a factory,\* and a few dwelling houses, for which that would soon create a demand. From this, he went on building, and furnishing inducements for others to build, until the village has assumed its present size and importance.

But to furnish a water-power, lay out a village, and erect buildings, is not, as a matter of course, to lay a foundation for subsequent enterprise and prosperity. We have seen villages that are going to decay, and apparently soon to be deserted. This village would have been deserted, at its very beginning, had a species of manufacturing been commenced here, for which there was little demand; or had agents been employed who had no capacity to influence trade, or secure a market for our products. And even with all this, it were better that it had been deserted, if no adequate provision were made for the moral and educational wants of its inhabitants; if it were to be filled with a population of bodies rather than souls—a village of mere human animals, without intellectual or moral culture, disowning the Sabbath, and the God in whom we live, and move, and have our being. Of all this its founder was aware; hence his ready patronage of whatever looks towards the moral and religious welfare of the community. And yet he seems never to have forgotten that the best way to aid a community in regard to these higher interests, is to induce them to aid themselves. To build houses of worship for them, and endow their ecclesiastical societies with ample funds to meet all current expenses, would be to confer a very doubtful blessing. The true way is to aid them while they need it, just enough to encourage them to put forth their own strength for the founding and support of these institutions. Then they will prize them. Then they will feel that the guardianship of these institutions rests with them, and they will be disposed to take care of them.

This has been the course actually pursued by our departed

\* The Copper-Mill.

friend. Indeed, such was his discernment of human nature, that he saw the wisdom of this policy in regard to other than religious and public interests, and adopted it largely in his commercial transactions. If, in effecting a transfer, he made a purchase of real estate, which he could not oversee, he did not choose to assume the whole ownership himself, but he shared it with others, whose interest in it would lead them to preserve it from decay, and render it productive. Under this policy he has seen his worldly enterprises prosper; and he has lived long enough to see its wisdom proved in its application to the more important interests of religion. This community had churches organized among them as soon, and in as rapid succession, as they were needed; and the worship of God was celebrated here in the very infancy of the place. And our institutions are now, to all appearance, planted on as substantial a foundation, and give as fair promise of answering well their end, as those of any similar community in the region. It is sufficient to say, in this connection, as illustrating the care of Mr. Phelps for the interests of religion among us, that he made a donation to this Society of the building spot on which this house is erected, and of the sum of one thousand dollars to aid in its construction. In addition to this, he has pledged, for a term of years, an annual donation, to aid in defraying the current expenses of this society.

Since his enterprise began to expend itself in this town, it has more than quadrupled its population, and the property within the same territorial limits has tripled since 1845. Hundreds of families are supported in this town by factories whose existence is to be traced to his enterprise; and not a few are to be found, who began in his employ, less than ten years ago, penniless, but have now comfortable homes, and can count their thousands.

Such is a brief survey of the claims which the barest justice to ourselves presents, for some improvement of the late dispensation of Providence, in removing from the ranks of the living, the founder and patron of this place. The village owes its very existence, and all its prosperity, under God, to him: it bears his name: and his whole policy in regard to it, has made him worthy of our veneration.

Let us inquire, then, in the light of his own personal history, what associations, and what lessons of practical wisdom, the name ANSONIA should suggest.

In the statements that I may make, there will not, probably, be much that you have not already learned from the newspapers, or from other sources; it is not my office, on this occasion, so much to give you facts which you do not know, as to lead you to some improvement of those which you do know. The order which I propose to adopt, is, first, to submit a brief sketch of his life, and, secondly, to develope the more prominent traits of his character; pointing out, incidentally, their connection with his great achievements and his worth.

1. Anson G. Phelps was born in March, of the year 1781. His birth-place and his early home was in Simsbury, in this State. In early infancy he was bereft of his father, and at the tender age of eleven, of his mother. But in those early years, the forming hand of the mother had well done its work. Her eminently Christian spirit, her godly example, and her pious counsels, had breathed over his childhood an influence that was lasting as life. Hers was not an austere, ungenial, and repulsive type of religion; but such as became a Christian mother. Hence he loved to be with her, and neglected the sports of other children, that he might render her such assistance as he could, and more than all, that he might enjoy her society. Besides promoting other and higher ends, this, doubtless, gave a practical turn to his thoughts in early life, and inspired him with a disrelish for trifles, and a taste for that which is substantial, and useful and enduring.\* When he became an orphan, by the death of his mother, he made his home with the minister of the parish, the Rev. Mr. Utley, with whom he remained a number of years. While living with him, he learned the saddler's trade of an older brother, and prepared to try the rough ways of life alone. He always looked back on this portion of his life with much satisfaction, and retained for "good Father Utley," as he called him, great veneration and affection. And this was well repaid, with corresponding sentiments of regard. The good man treated him ever as a son, and retained his interest in him as long as he lived. At about the age of 18, in connection with a powerful revival of religion, under the preaching of the Rev. Mr. Hallock, his mind became deeply penetrated and moved with a sense of divine things, and he was led to devote himself heartily to the interests of religion, and the service of God.

When his minority was past, he was led by a desire for enlarged enterprise to remove to Hartford, where he became an active member of the church under the care of Dr. Strong. In this city he married Miss Olivia Eggleston, the companion of his subsequent life. For several years, while carrying on in partnership with Mr. Cramton the trade which he learned in his youth, he passed his summers at the North, and his winters at the South; devoting the one more especially to manufacturing, and the other to the sale of his wares. After a time he sold out his interest in the business to his partner, and embarked in an exclusively mercantile traffic.

As his operations became extended, it was manifest that New-York afforded the best facilities for carrying them on, and he removed in 1815 to that city. Here he became a member, and a most active and efficient officer of Dr. Spring's church. His membership was afterwards transferred to the Mercer Street

\* Mr. Phelps has testified his own deep sense of his indebtedness to this early maternal influence, by erecting, in the latter portion of his life, a handsome monument over the grave of his mother.

church, (of which he was one of the founders,) and in which he remained until his death. In business he became associated with Elisha Peck, at the corner of Cliff and Fulton streets. They expended large amounts in manufacturing interests in Haverstraw, and built at their own expense the greater part of the village known by the name of Sampsonville. Here he narrowly escaped death by the explosion of a steamboat at Grassy Point. He was on his way to the landing to take passage in this boat, when he was dissuaded by the captain of a schooner, who invited him to take passage with him, and assured him that he would reach New-York within half an hour of the time of the boat. Scarcely one who entered the ill-fated boat at that point escaped.

In 1832 occurred another accident, which, but for a similar Providence, had involved him in equal peril of life. His store at the corner of Cliff and Fulton streets had been too heavily packed in its upper stories for the strength of the building, and fell in the middle of the day with a terrific crash, killing nine persons who were employed in it. The Bible Society was to have held its meeting at his store at that very hour. But in consequence of some intervening circumstance, the meeting was held at another place, and Mr. Phelps was absent from his store to attend it. One more change in his business relations, placed him at the head of the firm so long and widely known as that of Phelps, Dodge & Co., in which he became associated with his son, and sons-in-law.

Of the constant and always safe enlargement of his business, and his wonderful success, I need only say—it all evinces a degree of forecast, sagacity and enterprise that is rarely to be found so happily blended in one man, and when thus blended constitutes the highest order of talent. Mr. Phelps was not a common man—a man elevated by the merest accident or caprice of fortune to a position of wealth and influence. He made his way up to that position, under the favoring Providence of heaven, by the force of his own well directed efforts.

2. To this brief synopsis of the events of his life, some incidents will be added, in the illustration which I am to attempt of his character. It may not be premature for me to say at this stage of the discourse, that I regard Mr. Phelps as an eminent example of the type of character commended in the psalm with which this discourse was introduced. He was a “man who feared the Lord.” Early in life he devoted himself to the service of God, and never swerved from that consecrated vow. A long life has he spent in that whirl of worldly excitement that “drowns so many in destruction and perdition;” but he kept wide of the vortex, and out-rode the danger—maintaining his integrity to the last. “He remembered his Creator in the days of his youth,” and when the days of trial came—those days that make others worldly and extravagant and vain—his God remembered him.

The fear of God was a pervading element of his character. It modified his aims—it fortified his principles—it spiritualized his affections. It was a permanent principle ; it passed on with him from place to place, and from stage to stage of life. When he removed to Hartford, he did not forget his church membership, and leave his religion behind. He was faithful to the domestic altar and to the prayer-meeting. At the one, he gathered all his servants, male and female, and each read the scriptures in turn, and to the other he was fond of taking his children, and as many of his family as could go.

When he removed to New-York, it was not simply the merchant, it was the Christian, still true to his conscience and his God, that removed. His religion was of a quiet, but it was not of an inactive type. Dr. Spring was not the man to attract an indolent, lukewarm professor of religion to his church. There was an atmosphere of high and heavenly piety there. And it was this consideration, doubtless, that determined Mr. Phelps in the choice of his church. And he soon found, that he himself was not to remain idle for want of something to do. He found himself often in the atmosphere of a revival of religion, and entered with all the energy of his soul upon the interesting and delightful duties that were thus laid upon him. The same spirit of enterprise that impelled him on in his commercial pursuits, inspired him to look around him upon the existing moral desolations, and push in this direction and in that, and plant the standard of religion wherever there was good to be done.

He hailed the dawning of the Sunday-School enterprise, as soon as its light broke upon this country, and was among the first to give it a trial in New-York. His efforts, too, in behalf of seamen, especially in sustaining the Bethel prayer-meetings, and establishing the seamen's church—all speak the same active out-working principle of the fear of the Lord. A man may make princely donations and bequests from other motives ; but it is difficult to conceive that he should go and establish a prayer-meeting among the degraded and vicious, and labor for their spiritual good, without some impulse derived from "the fear of the Lord." Let it not be forgotten, then, in Ansonia, that this place was founded by one who was not ashamed to be known as a God-fearing man : one with whom the fear of God was a principle strong enough to cast out all other fear : one who bowed his neck in his youth, to the yoke of the Redeemer, and did not cast it off in his manhood, nor to the last day of his life. Consigned in early life to orphanage, he made choice of God for his Father, and clung to his guiding hand through all his long journey to the grave. And what father ever repaid the filial confidence of a son so well ? Who has been led along in a brighter and more desirable pathway ? Who has scattered blessings more than he ? Who has oftener met the speaking smile, or the grateful tear from those who have been blessed by his bounty ? Who has gone

down to the grave with so many to whom his memory is dear ; so many to rise up and call him blessed ?

With him kindness to man was one of the fruits of piety towards God. Hence it was not fitful and occasional, but constant. He waited not to be importuned : his benevolence was spontaneous. It was manifested, not merely when the subscription paper was presented, or the plate was passed, but often when no one else thought of it, and nothing of the kind was expected. "The good man sheweth favor and lendeth." This was one of his favorite methods of doing good. He loved to help individuals as well as communities, by inducing them to help themselves. And no man ever did this with a more accurate discernment of character, and of the probabilities that his kindness would not be abused. I am informed, by those who have long been observant of his habits, that he has probably assisted more who have been unfortunate and poor, to get a start in life, than any man of our times.\* Mr. Phelps seldom mistook his man : he intended to bestow his acts of kindness with discrimination, and where they would do some good : and he was generally successful. He ordered his affairs with discretion.

But it was not only in the way of lending to those who needed the accommodation, that he did good with his money. As you are all well aware, he has been the liberal patron of every enterprise that he believed was doing good. He has for years cast in with the rich, his gifts, large and munificent as any of theirs, into the treasury of the Lord. He has seen the time, too, when with the poor widow, he "cast in more than they all." In his native place there lived, in the days of his boyhood, a young man, of ready memory, and much fluency of tongue, who was a Universalist. He was familiar with the Scriptures, and evinced so much talent in perverting them, that many became the dupes of his sophistry. In the revival of religion in which young Phelps was brought into the kingdom of Christ, this man was converted too. It soon became apparent that his talents might be made of great service in the ministry of the gospel, if he could be prepared for it. But it was necessary to raise funds to support his family, while he should be pursuing his studies with a neighboring clergyman. Young Phelps had saved from his earnings, twenty-five dollars. This was all that he was worth : and yet every

\* As a specimen of the spontaneousness with which he often performed acts of this sort, I give the following. He was once attending an auction sale of metal, where he saw among the buyers, a man who made, as he thought, a fortunate bid, but surprised him by the smallness of the quantity that he decided to take. He had never seen the man before, but as he knew that it could not fail to be for his advantage to take a larger quantity at the price, he suggested to him that he would never get it at so low a rate again ; this brought out the fact that the man had gone the entire length of his purse ; without another word, Mr. Phelps offered to furnish him the money to buy a hundred boxes instead of thirty, as he at first proposed, and the bargain was made. This proved a timely and valuable assistance, and laid the foundation for a pleasant acquaintance between them in after life. This gentleman, who related the incident himself, died a few years since, a wealthy and respected inhabitant of our own town.

cent of it he cheerfully contributed to aid in preparing that man to preach the gospel. That was doubtless the greatest gift he ever bestowed. If one year ago he had contributed a million of dollars, perhaps it would not have been equal to it. Noble testimony from that young heart to the power and excellence of a preached gospel! Noble sacrifice of that cherished treasure, for the honor and glory of the Redeemer! Who can tell the influence of that act upon his own mind, through the whole of life? Who can show us that his subsequent prosperity was not the direct fulfilment of the promise of Christ, that those who make such sacrifices for him, shall receive manifold more in this present world?

Here is a point that is well worthy of the consideration of all the young men of Ansonia. The providence of God, my young friends, will have something to do with your future prosperity in the world. And can you do better than to begin life as he did, by remembering your Creator in the days of your youth—by lending to the Lord—by laying up treasure in heaven? The man whom he thus aided in introducing to the work of preaching the gospel, proved worthy of the effort that was made in his behalf. He became a devoted and very useful minister of Christ, and died a few years since, in one of our Western villages, in a good old age. A warm friendship existed between them while he lived, and Mr. Phelps aided in preparing two of his sons\* for the same sphere of usefulness.

The career of benevolence that was thus begun, was continued through the whole of his subsequent life. To go no further back than the term of his residence in New-York, we find him aiding in establishing the Seamen's Friend Society,—the Seamen's Bank for Savings, of which he was a director, from its organization to the day of his death,—the Bible Society,—the Tract Society,—the Foreign and Home Missionary Societies, Temperance, Peace, Foreign, Evangelical, Colonization, Education, and other societies of a similar kind. Not one has been formed in the city of New-York, for the last forty years, in which he has not taken an active part, continuing his patronage until his death.† He has been for years President of the Blind Asylum. By his frequent visits, the pupils had become familiar with his voice, and exhibited their affection by crowding around him, taking his hands, and following him from room to room, and lingering around him as long as he remained. When it was made known to them that

\* One of them was the late Dr. Adams, of Syracuse, whose wife was a niece of Mr. Phelps.

† The Colonization enterprise was to his mind a great and grand one, promising, as he viewed it, home to hundreds of thousands of the colored race from our own country, and the blessings of the gospel to the darkened continent of Africa. He was the sincere friend of that portion of our population, and treated them as became a friend. When he saw in any one of them the image of Christ, he was not ashamed to own him as a brother: he often invited the black man to his house and to his table, and introduced him to other invited guests.

he was forever gone, there was much deep distress among the inmates. And some of you can tell with what touching pathos they chanted his requiem when he was gathered to the dust. Truly, he "sowed by the side of all waters," and in every land the seed is now blossoming, or the harvest is white. May his mantle fall on all those who inherit his wealth, and on the inhabitants of this place which inherits his name.

All who have known him are well aware that he was remarkable for his prompt and fixed decisions. He saw all that he cared to see of a matter, almost at a glance, and his line of action in regard to it was determined as soon. And when a point was thus settled, it was of no use to attempt to change him; his heart was fixed. This is a quality that implies a mind of no ordinary power—it is not safe for weaker minds to act altogether in this way. Their decisions would too often prove rash and hurtful, and require to be reviewed. But in regard to the great governing principles of life, it is safe and it is wise to imitate him. The sooner these principles are fixed with a decision that neither life nor death, nor time nor eternity can change, the better. It is interesting to imagine how such a mind as that of Mr. Phelps must have acted in that season of religious awakening with which his piety commenced. He had been taught before, that he needed to know the power of divine grace upon his heart, and he believed it; but it remained for him to contemplate eternal things in that strong and clear light that brings them near, and makes them real; "to taste the word of God, and the powers of the world to come," and feel that the great question of life and death was pressing for a decision and could not be delayed. There were thoughts of God and of Christ; of the soul and of death; of the judgment and of eternity; of heaven and of hell; of a life of piety, and a life of sin; and now was to be made the decision that was to turn the scale for the one side or the other. What inward heavings, what tumult of soul, what struggles, what conflicts convulsed his soul at that hour! But there was a mind that had a perception of the great, the noble, and the true; even in the things of this world, he was disposed to turn away from whatever seemed trivial or narrow or small, and give his preference to that which had the aspect of greatness, and gave promise of large and important results. How then must the grand and mighty conceptions of religion, of God and eternity, have engrossed his powers, and expanded before the vision of his soul, until they filled all the field of his view, and shut this present world away from his thoughts! Methinks I can penetrate the workings of his mind at that hour. "Here," said he, "is something worth living for; an object vast enough for the largest ambition of man; an object grand enough for the whole of life, and for the life to come. Now I see man divested of his littleness; if sin has made him little, God has made him great; the soul is great; its Redeemer is great; eternity is great; the inheritance

and glories of heaven are great; I will not waver, my heart is fixed; I will live for God; I will seek the glory of his kingdom; I will have respect unto the recompense of the reward." Here is the true explanation of his willingness at that time, to give up for the cause of God, the whole of that little pittance which he had toiled so long to gain. He had given his soul to God; there was no wavering, no indecision, no half consecration; he had made a transfer of himself—the entire man, to the kingdom of Christ; and what now were a few dollars and cents? There was needed that element of stern, inflexible decision in his piety; without it, the world as he encountered it, would have broken his anchor-hold, and torn him loose from God and from heaven. But by the grace of God, that decision of character that never faltered in other things, made him unwavering here. It reached on through the whole of life; it will never be shaken while eternity rolls.

Doubtless all who are before me, will be interested to know, if his death "became him, like his life." Without opening the door of that room in which weakness and decay are doing their work upon his manly frame, and the near anticipation of the closing scene is taking hold upon his soul, I may say, in reply, with no qualification or reserve, there is nothing to be witnessed there, that is not the appropriate fruit of such a life as his. He has always been a man of action rather than of words. He has never been forward to speak of his own exercises and feelings, but has chosen to manifest them rather by his works. But he has always loved the cause of Christ, the meetings for prayer, and the songs of Zion, and the communion of God's people, and he loves them still. He exhibits no raptures, no ecstasies, no out-bursting triumphant joy: but all is calm and peaceful, betokening a staid and implicit faith in the Saviour of the world. He builds no hopes upon his past good works, his charities, his bequests: \* he knows

\* The distribution of his property was in keeping with his character for benevolence; large sums being given to charitable and religious objects, which amount to a total of over half a million of dollars. After providing liberally for his widow, he gives \$100,000 to each of his 6 children, \$10,000 to each of his 22 grand-children, and an additional \$5000 to each of them, to be paid by the executors, with the injunction from him to use the increase of this fund sacredly for benevolent purposes, and transmit to their heirs with the same injunction, and after making several bequests to relations, has left the following sums to various benevolent objects, providing for their payment by instalments during a term of years:

To the American Bible Society \$100,000; to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, \$100,000; American Home Missionary Society, \$100,000; to literary and theological education in Liberia, Africa, subject to the control of the executors, \$50,000; Union Theological Seminary, N. Y., \$5,000; Institution for the Blind, \$5,000; N. Y. State Colonization Society, \$5,000; Auburn Theological Seminary, \$3,000; Half Orphan Society, Fourth av. \$1,000; Colored Orphan Society, \$1,000; Congregational Church, Simsbury, Conn., for use of the poor, \$1,000.

In addition to the above, Mr. Phelps, just previous to his death, placed in the hands of his son \$100,000, the interest to be used at his discretion for the spread of the Gospel, and the principal eventually to be invested equally for the benefit of the American Bible Societies, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. This disposition of Mr. Phelps' property, including the amount given to each of his twenty-

he has but given to God his own. He knows they are all too insignificant and too worthless to avail anything as a price for the favor of God, and a heavenly home. He speaks of himself, again and again, as “a poor lost sinner, having no hope but in his Redeemer’s blood.” And he speaks thus because he feels that it is true. No man on earth could have embued his mind with such convictions, if there had not been something within to respond to them. He felt that there was no hope for him, but in the redemption that was wrought by Christ Jesus: but there he found hope, assurance, and rest for his soul. There was nothing in that chamber of sickness, that seemed like doubt: \* he knew in whom he had believed, and was persuaded that he would keep that which had so long been committed to him.

A fuller account of his last hours we shall doubtless have, but it will not vary in its general tenor from this. They were the last hours of one whose testimony for Christ had been already given, in a series of benevolent and Christian acts that marked a long and resplendent pathway; a pathway which he had trodden for more than half a century with a true, and firm, and steady step. With that same step he advanced to the last milestone of his journey; he changed it not, till he came in sight of the mark, and clasped the goal. “The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.” He lives beyond the term of life: his name and his influence cannot easily die.

I have endeavored to set forth something of the reasons which we have to cherish the memory of our late patron and friend; he deserved it at our hands, by his character; he deserved it by his worth; he deserved it by his example, by his acts, and by his gifts. There is no point of view, that does not afford us ground for unfeigned satisfaction that the place we inhabit is so euphoniously linked to his memory. May his kindred never have occasion to complain that we have inherited his name only to disgrace it. That no such occasion may be given them, let us ever bear in mind, that the name of our village is a standing and emphatic rebuke of all that is low, and trivial, and unworthy of the true dignity of man. It is as if we beheld carved in huge capitals upon the rocky battlements of these hills, and written all over our public buildings, and our factories and stores—“Let not your life be consumed with trifles: aim at something that shall be worthy of creatures that were formed for immortality: be earnest, energetic, fearless men: let there be decision, wise and unflinching, in your personal, and in your public aims: aim at achievement: make your village a model village—a pattern of

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two grand children, makes the munificent bequest of \$581,000, for religious and benevolent purposes.

\* When his friends expressed to him their assurance that God would continue the supports of his grace to the last, and that the Saviour had prepared a mansion for him in heaven, he replied, not with a wish or a hope that it might be so, but with the full assurance of faith, in such utterances as these: “O yes, I know it; I believe it.”

external neatness and of moral purity and loveliness: a village that shall not be wanting in outward adornments and attractions for the eye, but shall evince that man has caught some impulse from the beauty that nature has shed over the spot."

But let no natural or architectural grace that may pertain to it, outshine the spirit of enterprise or of virtue on the part of its inhabitants. Aim, especially, in point of intelligence and moral worth, at continual advancement. Stand committed to progress—progress in your schools, in your churches, in all your public interests—hold fast to them, and hold them up, as though you felt that their waning, or their downfall, would be your own.

Let the children and youth of your community be early imbued with noble sentiments and aims of life. Let them be taught to abhor idleness and ignorance, and "set their faces as a flint" against everything that tends to dissipation, corruption or vice. Inspire them with a love of enterprise and high intelligence: with the conviction that they can be something more than cyphers in the world, and the fixed resolve that they will. For their sakes, and your own, let the holy day of God be sacredly guarded and kept. Defend it as the stronghold of your own prosperity, and the last bulwark of religion among you. Let it find you, often as it comes, devoutly gathered in the sanctuary, and there let it remind you of the claims of the soul, of religion, and of God. Remember that death is before you as well as life, and that "after that is the judgment." Of all this, may the name of our village, associated, as it is, with such a history and such a character, most appropriately admonish us, as often as we give it utterance, and as often as we hear it. May the admonition be well heeded by us all, and by the generations that are to come: and guided by the example of one who "being dead yet speaketh,"—speaketh especially to us,—may it be ours to gain at last, an end as full of hope and immortality, as his.

**SERMON DCXVI.**

BY REV. CORNELIUS C. VAN ARSDALE, D. D.

COALEGIATE PASTOR OF BLEECKER-STREET REFORMED DUTCH CHURCH,  
NEW-YORK.

## THE WISDOM OF WINNING SOULS.

"He that winneth souls is wise."—Prov. xi. 30.

The word of God plainly declares, and all its provisions and revelations are based on the fact, that man, as a spiritual and immortal being, in himself, is lost. In his natural estate, he is lost from the way of truth. Sin has darkened his mind, obscured its perceptions, and perverted its powers. He is lost from the way of peace. Struck by the objects of sense, and seeking his supreme good in the things of time, his soul remains unsatisfied, unblest. He is lost from God, the chief good, the only satisfying, the only enduring good. As sin has destroyed God's image in his soul, so it has alienated his affections from God; it has produced indifference, and coldness, nay even "enmity" in his heart towards God, his creator, preserver, and judge. Being thus lost from all communion and friendship with God, he is a wanderer from God, from the sweet joy and the sanctifying power of his love, and the blessed hope of his favor; he is the creature of vain desires and of unholy affections—and consequently to him a holy God is an object of dread; death, the king of terrors, and eternity, covered with gloom; for as he is lost from the way of spiritual peace here, so he is lost to the soul-cheering prospect of happiness hereafter—he is lost from the way to eternal life, and is pursuing the way to eternal death. This truth, plainly implied in our text, and confirmed by observation and experience, is spread out clearly on every page of the inspired word; but it is only in the light of that inspired word that we can see revealed the full extent, and the appalling nature of that ruin in which man is involved by sin; how completely, how hopelessly and forever he is lost in himself. It is only in the light of that word, that we can form anything like an adequate idea of the appalling nature and effects of sin, or of the value of that soul which by sin is lost. Here we learn its exalted origin, its deep pollution, its awful guilt. We see what it is for a soul to be lost here, and to remain lost, and be lost forever. By this light we follow it through the darkness of death—we behold it at the bar of its holy Judge—we hear it condemned by his righteous law—we see it hurled from his lofty throne—hell opens to receive it—the fire that never shall be quenched is flaming around it—the worm that never dies is gnawing within it—damned spirits and fiends of

darkness are exulting over it. And from that abode of horror the cry comes back to earth—lost!—lost!—lost! A soul is lost. O, what a loss is there! We fly to the page of infallible truth, and ask how long—how long is this agony of death, this remorse, and despair, and torment to last? The answer is—“everlasting punishment”—“eternal death”—“the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and forever.” This is a soul finally lost. No earthly calamity can be compared to this—no imagery of mortal woe, however agonizing and crushing, can adequately illustrate this. This is the penalty, and, if left to work out its own results, the inevitable effect of sin.

But the text also reminds us that with the living, the soul is not yet beyond recovery lost; it may be saved. Jesus Christ came into the world “to seek and to save that which was lost.” Through the abundant and all-sufficient provisions of the gospel, that darkened mind may be enlightened, those alienated affections brought back to God, that precious soul re-instamped with the divine image—its sins pardoned, its inward peace restored, and its immortal life of knowledge, holiness and joy secured. This is the grand, the sublime purpose of the gospel; and this is the “great salvation” which, if truly embraced during the period in which its provisions are available, that gospel achieves. Among the various means appointed of God by which this glorious gospel is made successful in winning souls, the christian ministry holds a prominent place; for “it hath pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” This is especially the design—the great object of the ministry. It is this object which magnifies the office. It is not in assuming high-sounding titles, as Pope, or arch-bishop, or arch-deacon, or diocesan-bishop—offices and even titles which are not found in the word of God, that men magnify this office. It is not by wrapping themselves up in the icy folds of a distant and pharisaical dignity; not by wearing the aspect of mere external sanctity; not by saying in their conduct to publicans and sinners, Stand aside, for “I am holier than thou;” not by playing the orator before men to win their praise; not by acquiring fame merely for their learning and talent, that they magnify their office. Nay, by things like these they pervert and impiously desecrate the office. All such ends are infinitely too low. It is the office, as it should be the joy and glory of the christian minister, to aim at nothing less than saving the lost, than winning souls to Christ. It is because this is the great object of the office,—that notwithstanding all the sacrifices he is called to make of a temporal nature, all the trials he is called to bear; though no profession or pursuit is so much abused by men, and, in the great majority of cases, so poorly paid; still he is wise who, with his heart warmed with the love of Christ, cheered with the hope of heaven, and impelled by a yearning, earnest desire for the salvation of men, selects this above all others, as the work of his life. It is in this view of it,

that all other professions and pursuits sink into nothing in comparison with it. They are directed principally to the things of time; this aims directly at eternal things. They relate chiefly to winning the pleasures, or riches, or honors of earth; the great object of this is to win souls from sin and death, to a blissful and glorious immortality. To such, therefore, especially, though not exclusively, for the duty rests on all as the privilege is open to all, we may say, "he that winneth souls is wise."

We consider the text then, as affirming THE WISDOM OF WINNING SOULS. Upon this subject there are two propositions which especially claim our attention.

First. *To win souls requires wisdom.*

Secondly. *To win souls is an evidence of the highest wisdom.*

I. *To win souls requires wisdom.*

Wisdom may be defined, the selection of the best ends, and the pursuit of those ends, with such devotion and diligence, and by such means, as are adapted to secure their attainment.

Wisdom then is requisite to see the vast importance of the end proposed in winning souls; to appreciate the unspeakable value of the soul; to judge of it as God describes it, as lost in itself, and yet not beyond recovery lost; as precious, though it be beyond all price; and, imminent as its perils are beyond our power to describe, that which may yet, through the provisions of the gospel, be saved with an everlasting salvation, and saved by man's instrumentality. And when wisdom selects this as its great end and aim, wisdom is further necessary to perceive—

*Wherein a soul is lost.*

*When it is won, and*

*How to win it.*

To be instructed on these points, if man is wise, he will go to the fountain of wisdom. He will not rely upon the word of man, but go to the word of God. He will not take his thoughts from any finite and fallible mind like his own, but, in a teachable and prayerful spirit, study the page of inspired truth, that the thoughts in his mind may come to it from the mind of God, that the same views which are held in his mind may be those that are transmitted to it from the infinite mind.

1. Now while we do not find that God tells us that man lost any mental faculty by his original transgression; or that we have not now every faculty which Adam had in his innocence, yet we do find that death, temporal and spiritual, and consequently, unless grace interpose to save, eternal, was inflicted, and has descended with his posterity. If we examine the law of God—which expresses from the divine mind a rule of action for man, and points out what, in the nature of things, would be the state of man's heart, and as the effect of this, the character of his life, if all was right with him, we need go no farther than the first commandment, as our Lord expressed it, to see that

himself is lost, and *wherein he is lost*. Supreme love to God, as the all-directing, all-controlling motive and affection of the soul, is what that law requires, and that on which all its other requirements are founded. If the heart was right, this would be its spontaneous, its cheerful offering; for God only is worthy of, and to God only is due, the supreme love of the soul. And any soul in which that supreme love is not, and has not always been, thereby exhibits its alienation from God and deep depravity—breaks the law of God, and is under its condemnation. Men are lost, then, by this inward, spiritual blindness, alienation and depravity; and they are lost as to the possibility of salvation on the ground of their morality—their merits; for having failed, in any degree or at any time, fully to comply with that law, they are under the law condemned, guilty, lost.

2. He who would win souls must be wise to know *what it is to win a soul*, or *when a soul is won*.

From what has already been said, it will be evident that a soul is not won as long as it rests on any merit in itself, as the ground of its hope. It must have good works, but they must be the fruit of faith, not the ground of it. There must be good works to prove that faith and love are genuine, and living in the soul; for where they are, these will as certainly be, as warmth will be where there is fire. There is no salvation, therefore, without good works. But if the law has ever been broken, then “*by the deeds of the law can no flesh living be justified*.” A soul is not won, therefore, merely because the outward life may be blameless or commendable in the sight of men.

A soul is not won when it is brought merely to adopt any abstract or speculative belief, however orthodox. Essential as a sound and orthodox faith is, as controlling and directing the exercises of the soul, and the motives of our action, and God judges of all actions by the motives from which they proceed, yet it is possible to hold even “*the truth in unrighteousness*”—to have “*a name to live while we are dead*.” “*The devils believe and tremble*.”

A soul is not won merely because it may be interested on the subject of religion—or because it may for a time be convicted of sin, and then this conviction may subside, and it may relapse into a state of indifference which it mistakes for conversion. To be won, it must be interested on the subject of religion, it must be brought to feel its sin and its guilt—but it must be brought also to accept of Christ—to loathe and renounce sin—to feel the attractions of Christ and of holiness—and, with the spirit of Christ, to enter upon a new and holy life.

A soul is not won merely because a man connects himself with the visible church. There was one at least among the number of our Lord’s professed disciples, who attended on his personal ministrations, in whose heart covetousness was still a reigning passion, and whose epitaph, as written by the finger of the Master

himself, is—"it were better for that man if he had never been born." Now so far as any outward and visible organization is regarded, he surely was connected with "the true church"—the church to which Christ himself ministered, and yet his soul was not won; it was lost. Though united outwardly with the church, his soul remained lost under the dominion of that "covetousness which is idolatry," and which, we have great reason to fear, is still the reigning passion, and therefore will prove the damning sin of many a one in our day, and in this city, who is connected outwardly with the Church; who is striving to serve two opposite masters, God and Mammon; and who by his coldness and lukewarmness in the service of God, and his worldly-mindedness, his activity and devotion in the service of Mammon, proves which is his master. While therefore we are not to undervalue the holy sacraments as instituted by Christ, nor to consider a soul won which neglects them; while they are his own appointed mode of an open confession of him before men, and means of strengthening and cultivating grace in those who have grace; and while we are told in his word that those who receive him keep his commandments, and he says "this do in remembrance of me;" yet are we to guard carefully against mistaking a *profession* of religion for the *possession* of religion, or supposing that a connection with the visible church, necessarily implies a connection with the true and spiritual church of Christ. Here is the fearful peril of magnifying any outward form of church organization to the arrogant exclusion of others. Relation to "the church" in such cases, comes to be viewed as a substitute for relation to Christ; and an outward profession, as a substitute for spirituality of mind, and a justifying and sanctifying faith. It is the *soul* which is to be won, and while that remains unregenerate, under the dominion and curse of sin, supremely occupied with and devoted to the world, whether in the church or out of the church, God tells us, that, "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth any thing, but a new creature." The soul, then, according to the word of God, is won only when it is "born again;" when, in its perceptions of truth, in its affections, desires, motives and aims, it is "a new creature," and has entered on a new, spiritual life, in which "old things have passed away, and all things have become new." The evidence of it, is a personal experience of repentance of sin, of trust in the atoning merits of Christ as the only ground of justification before God, of "love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," and the outward illustration of these inward and spiritual graces in all holy living. When therefore Christ tells us that a man must be "born again" if he is ever saved, it is evident that it is no slight change—no little reformation, which proves a lost soul won; it is no mere outward morality, however blameless, no mere external forms or relations, no momentary and evanescent goodness, "like the morning cloud,"

which proves the lost soul is won ; it is like life from the dead, for it is a new spiritual and heavenly life wrought in the soul. Nothing short of this will do ; for without this, a man cannot see the kingdom of God. Now it will at once be seen that this is something wholly beyond the power of man to effect.

From the very nature of this great moral change—this new spiritual birth—it is self-evident that God only can effect it ; the efficient, new-creating power, is to come from God. And so in his word he plainly declares it to be the work of his Holy Spirit.

Yet in our text, and other passages of Scripture, man is said to win souls. But it is beyond man's power to regenerate the soul, by which only it can be won.

3. *How then are souls to be won?* Now observe it is declared to be the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the power of the Holy Spirit, exerted over the soul. It is then a spiritual work—spirit acting on spirit, enlightening the understanding, or giving vivid perceptions of truth, unfolding the nature of sin, and the soul's sinfulness to itself, exhibiting an all-sufficient Saviour, awakening trust in him, gratitude towards him, love for, and devotion to him. It is not spirit acting on matter, or on a machine, or on a brute. It is spirit acting on a soul endowed with reason, with susceptibilities, with affections, with sympathies, and with a will, which is controlled by its judgment and affections. Now though, as we have seen, in man's natural state these, so far as any holy action, any spiritual life towards God is concerned, are, in the language of Scripture, dead, yet it is through these that the divine Spirit breathes a new and divine life into the soul ; and therefore the great instrument by which the regeneration or sanctification of the soul is effected, as declared by himself, is the truth of God. Why are there no cases of regeneration in heathen lands ? All man's power is there ; man's conscience is there ; the Spirit of God is there ; but the word of God, that word which is "as a fire and a hammer," to melt and break the heart, is not there ; that gospel through which the soul is "begotten again to a lively hope," is not there.

It is then by the truth, as declared in God's word, that the lost soul is won ; and this truth being presented, and pressed home by man, and applied and made effectual by the Spirit, is the only instrumentality of winning souls. So we find that unbelief of God's word originally caused the loss of the soul ; and a true belief of Christ's gospel is that which wins the soul. Its great message is "he that believeth shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned." Faith, a vivid, practical belief of the truth, lies at the foundation, and is the living root of every Christian grace. But that belief is a belief of the truth ; then the lost soul must be shown the truth ; and although this is done in the Scriptures, yet has God also instituted the Christian ministry, by which that truth is to be reiterated and urged by the living voice upon the attention of men.

Wisdom, then, in one who would win souls, is necessary to know that truth, to defend it, and rightly to divide it. This is manifestly necessary in our day and in our country. While the truth has made our nation an asylum for all lands, we see Ireland pouring in upon us its hordes of outcasts. They come to seek the liberties, and advantages, and blessings which they cannot find at home; but they come with the ignorance, and superstition, and false religion which have oppressed them in their own land, and they are striving to propagate here the same idolatrous worship, the same traditions of men, the same subjection to "the man of sin," which has ruled them with a rod of iron, and which would exclude the word of God from the knowledge and faith of the people. Germany is flooding the land with thousands of infidels, who having been taught at home that religion is only another word for spiritual despotism and oppression, when here, renounce all religion, and endeavor to lead others with them in the way to death. France, by its unbelief, its fashionable follies, its licentious taste, its extravagant show, its immodest art, is awakening in the minds of multitudes an idea, that simplicity of manners, purity of thought, and modesty and devotion of spirit, exhibit a want of refinement, and belong rather to simpletons than to persons of intelligence and position. Now we might at once confound all such reasoners by simply asking whether for ourselves or for them, there would be any advantage in making America an Ireland, or a Germany, or a France? If not, what has made our form of government, our institutions, our general morals, our freedom from religious intolerance, so much better for the masses of the people, than in their own countries? It is the diffusion, the knowledge, and the influence of THE WORD OF GOD. Yet all these things are manifestly exerting a powerful, and wide-spread influence over our people. We remark, then, that those who would win souls require wisdom, not only to exhibit and defend the truth of God, but also rightly to divide it, or to select, and adapt that truth to the prevailing evils, or the character of the times. The great principles of gospel truth are the same in all ages, and equally essential for lost souls in any condition; but wisdom will "discern the signs of the times," and bring forth from the word of God, with force and faithfulness, the lessons appropriate to them. Even to a superficial observer of the present state of things in this city and country, it would be evident that if souls are to be won, something more is necessary than cold and abstract discussions in the pulpit. The almost universal prevalence of the inordinate love of wealth, of idle and corrupting amusements, of wicked extravagance in buildings, in dress, in luxurious living, in short, the common disposition to live supreme for this brief span of time, should waken as with one voice the rebukes, the earnest warnings and expostulations of the American pulpit. "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them."

Wisdom in those who would win souls is also necessary to know what are the essential articles of faith, declared as such, in the word of God, in distinction from those prescribed in the various creeds of men—to compare the exercises of an awakened and regenerate soul, the ground of its trust, the evidences of its hope, with those revealed in the word of God.

The very expression, "winneth souls," shows also the necessity of tact, in meeting objections and excuses, in presenting truth, in drawing out the experience, in probing every difficulty to its foundation, in suiting the remedy which God prescribes to the peculiarity of the case, in giving "to each his portion in due season."

So to win souls requires wisdom to discern and attain the spirit in which they are to be won. God declares it is only in the spirit of love for lost souls that we can win them. Terror frightens, force drives, but love *wins*. The heart then must be warmed with ardent love, if we would win souls. Even in speaking the rebukes, the warnings, the threatenings of God, we must "speak the truth in love." O, when the heart of the preacher ardently yearns for the salvation of souls; when he can say of them as Paul did, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth, till Christ be formed in you;" when, feeling their precious worth, his own soul melts over them, and wrestles in prayer for them; then will the truth of God come warm, and gushing, and mighty from his heart, and go home to theirs; then he will not need to borrow cold thoughts from others; his only difficulty will be to select thoughts from his overflowing mind, to control thought, and to stop in time the impetuous stream. Then he will speak with *earnestness* as one "who believes" and feels, and "therefore speaks." And this love of souls, when uttering the truth of God, is the mightiest medium through which the Spirit of God crowns the efforts of man to win souls that are lost. O how many sermons are preached, in which there is manifest no such love for souls, and which do not even seem to contemplate the winning of souls as the great aim and object of preaching.

But wisdom in winning souls is further necessary for the minister of the truth, to enable him to appreciate and improve aright the various authorized ways by which that truth may be employed to win souls. Such, for example, as first *preaching* that truth, faithfully and fearlessly, with this great end constantly in view. Secondly, imparting that truth by *catechetical* instruction to the children and youth of his charge. The good old custom seems to have gone out of fashion of late among us, or to be delegated by Pastors to other hands. But if they valued as they should the affection of the young, and the influence for good which this custom would secure to them, and the precious privilege of lodging that truth in these young minds, through which their souls may be won when the Pastors are in their graves, they would allow no man in this respect "to take their crown;"

they would themselves rejoice to do it. And in *pastoral visits* how directly may this truth be employed. Not indeed when the Pastor enters a house merely to talk about the weather, or the news of the day, or to get a cup of tea ; but when he goes there like a tender watchful shepherd, to animate, encourage and guard, or to win the souls of his flock ; when sociably and kindly, and yet faithfully, he converses with them on the great subject of their souls' salvation ; and, where it is desirable, he unites with their family circle in prayer, showing that he is a Pastor, a Shepherd indeed, watching for the souls of his flock "as one who must give an account."

And, finally, he requires wisdom to know the source from which he must seek aid in all his labors, if they are to be successful in winning souls, and above all things to value the means of obtaining that aid. "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God, who giveth liberally and upbraideth not." It is the Spirit of God only that can renew the soul, but God declares that he is more willing to give that Spirit to them that ask him than earthly parents are to "give good gifts to their children." He who would win souls, then, must be eminently a man of prayer. Every subject, every text of the Preacher, should be selected with prayer ; every sermon should be written with prayer ; earnestly should he beg light, unction, power from God, in preparing discourses which, for good or ill, are to tell in the endless future of souls ; and then from his knees in his closet, after fervent pleadings with God for his blessings, should he go to his pulpit to declare his message from God which is to be "a savor of life unto life or of death unto death."

He that winneth souls is wise because—

## II. *To win souls is an exhibition of the highest wisdom.*

This is evident from

*The good he confers, and*

*The reward he secures.*

1. "Let him know," says the inspired word (James v. 20), "that he who converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide (or prevent) a multitude of sins." "Shall save a soul from death!" Can mind conceive a greater good than this? An exalted, precious, immortal soul saved from death to everlasting life ; from an enemy changed into a friend, a child of God ; instead of being a soul forever lost, a soul forever won, and forever and forever the soul won *by him*. As angels in heaven rejoice over it, it is the soul won by him, as the peace of heaven is awakened within it, as it enters upon and pursues its new and holy life, as it triumphs in the hour of death, as it ascends to its home in heaven, it is the soul saved by him from death ; and there it shall forever be, a happy, sanctified, glorified soul, saved by him from death.

Turn now from the soul won to consider,

2. *The rewards of winning souls.* As there is no end more important than this, no honor more exalted than this, no charity more blessed than this, so there is no purer, more angelic, more Christ-like joy, than that of being instrumental in winning souls. The consciousness of the evil we prevent, and the good we secure, and the joy of our own soul, as its deep-tender sympathies partake in the holy joy of the new-born soul, begotten by the word and Spirit of God, through our instrumentality, into the family of the Redeemed, is, even here, the richest reward.

But what is this compared to the reward which shall be his, who, in the spirit of the Master, wins souls, in the day of the Lord Jesus?

What, says the holy apostle, when writing to those who through his instrumentality had been won from darkness and death, "what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing, are not even ye, in the day of the Lord Jesus, at his coming?" O, if saved ourselves, as our own souls will then be delivered from every infirmity, and advanced in every grace, and be more like the holy angels, and even like the blessed Master, what thought can measure the joy of beholding there souls which we have won from sin to holiness, from death to life! So the word of God also declares, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever." "He that winneth souls is wise."